

John Brewer Reef (18-075) — Townsville/Whitsunday Management Area

The purpose of public consultation is to gather feedback on this draft site plan particularly the proposed management strategies (refer to paragraphs 32-49). Consultation is open until 21 December 2020. For further information or to provide comments on this draft site plan, please call (07) 4750 0700 or email consultation@gbmpa.gov.au.

Traditional Owner acknowledgement

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority acknowledges the continuing sea country management and custodianship of the Great Barrier Reef by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners whose rich cultures, heritage values, enduring connections and shared efforts protect the Great Barrier Reef for future generations. In particular we acknowledge the Manbarra Peoples who have a connection to John Brewer Reef.

Target audience: All users (or potential users) of John Brewer Reef and authorised delegates who make decisions regarding permitted use of John Brewer Reef.

Objective

1. To support multiple uses to continue to occur at John Brewer Reef whilst continuing to maintain the site's natural, cultural and social values.

Purpose

2. To maintain the site's current values, separate uses that may potentially conflict and provide guidance for the assessment of future permit applications at the site.

Context

3. This site plan has been developed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) under section 7(4) of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.
4. John Brewer Reef lies east of the Palm Island Group, approximately 70km offshore, north-northeast from Townsville and has important cultural connections to the Manbarra Peoples of Palm Island.
5. The site is used both commercially and recreationally. Uses include anchoring, fishing, tourism, research, snorkelling and diving. See the Site Use section for further information.
6. In December 2019, following public consultation a permit was granted to the Museum of Underwater Art for the installation of public underwater artwork. The "Coral greenhouse" artwork and associated sculptures were installed in the north-east corner of the reef in December 2019.

7. Following the installation of the artwork, concerns were raised with the Authority about the impact on existing use. To allow time to understand these impacts, the Marine Park Authority Board (MPA meeting 260) decided that no new permissions should be granted for facilities at John Brewer Reef until an approved site plan is in place.
8. This draft site plan proposes new management strategies (refer to paragraphs 32-49) to support future and existing site use so the Reef can continue to be enjoyed by everyone and to minimise potentially conflicting uses.

Site boundaries

9. The boundaries for this site plan reflect the Conservation Park Zone (yellow zone) CP-18-4052 as per the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003*. A map of the site is included on page 6 of this site plan.

Site Values

Natural values

10. John Brewer Reef is a large, exposed mid-shelf reef, approximately six kilometres wide. Live coral cover is dominated by bushy and plate/ table varieties and has moderate (10-30%) hard coral cover.¹

Monitoring and management

11. For over 35 years, John Brewer Reef has been part of the Australian Institute of Marine Science Long-term Monitoring Program. The [Long-Term Monitoring Program](#) monitors coral cover, abundance of crown-of-thorns starfish and fish biodiversity.
12. Historically the site has experienced a number of outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish and in 2019 there were over 100 vessel days dedicated to crown-of-thorns-starfish control. The [crown-of-thorns starfish control](#) program undertakes crown-of-thorns starfish control activities and monitoring including Reef Health Impact Surveys.

Cultural, heritage and community values

Traditional Owner cultural heritage

13. Manbarra Peoples are the Traditional Owners of Palm Island. Manbarra Peoples refer to their sea country as the stingray dreaming story. This story area includes John Brewer Reef. Their connection to John Brewer Reef dates back before the area was covered by water (prior to sea level rise). Through dreamtime stories, connections to the area continue to be passed down from generation to generation.
14. Manbarra Peoples have been involved in the development of this draft site plan in recognition of their long connection to the area. Their involvement contributes to the Authority's long term strategy for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in protecting values and increasing co-management in the Marine Park.

European cultural heritage

15. John Brewer Reef was named after the *John Brewer*, a troop ship which became grounded on the reef in 1842 and was re-floated on the day of the grounding².
16. John Brewer Reef was the site of the "Four Seasons" floating hotel from 1988-89. Following its closure it was removed from the site³.

Unexploded Ordnance

17. The deeper water along the northern edge is known to be a site of historic munition dumping (unexploded ordnance) after World War II (refer to Map 1, page 6).
18. In 2013 a comprehensive site survey and report was commissioned by the Department of Defence to investigate the extent of the unexploded ordnance. For further information contact the [Department of Defence](#).

Site Use

19. John Brewer Reef is a known location for commercial and recreational fishing and is one of the most accessible Conservation Park Zone (yellow zone) reefs off Townsville.
20. It is also a location for snorkelling and diving. Tourism operators based in Townsville and Ayr use the site for both day trips and as an overnight anchorage.
21. The site is an occasional overnight anchorage for charter operators, the commercial fishing fleet and cruising yachts.

Management Arrangements

Current Management arrangements

Zoning

22. John Brewer Reef is within the Conservation Park Zone (yellow zone) (CP-18-4052), in the Townsville/Whitsunday Management Area and is not within a Plan of Management Area.

Structures

23. In accordance with the Marine Park Authority Board decision, no new permissions should be granted for facilities at John Brewer Reef until an approved site plan is in place.

Public Moorings

24. There are currently two public moorings installed at John Brewer Reef – see Table 1 below and Map 1 (page 6). These moorings do not require a booking and are available for use by both recreational and commercial users on a first-come-first-served basis.

Table 1: Public moorings at John Brewer Reef

Mooring Class	Colour of band on mooring	Max. vessel length (monohull)	Max. vessel length (multihull)	Latitude (GDA94)	Longitude (GDA94)
B	Green	20m	18m	18°37.331'S	147°03.149'E
C	Blue	25m	22m	18°37.170'S	147°03.368'E

Private Moorings

25. Currently there are two permitted private moorings installed adjacent to the underwater art site (one fore and aft and one single point). If you wish to use a private mooring, you must seek permission from the permit holder — the mooring buoy, tackle and point of attachment to the seabed are the permit holder's private property.

Underwater Art

26. The Coral Greenhouse (refer to Map 2, page 7) and associated sculptures are a public facility that can be accessed by all users. The coral greenhouse is 18 metres deep and best suited for divers and experienced snorkelers. For further information visit the [Museum of Underwater Art](#) website.

Access for larger vessels

27. All vessels less than 50 metres in *overall length* may anchor within the John Brewer Reef site, provided [responsible reef practices](#) for anchoring and mooring are followed.

Superyachts

28. Recreational *superyachts* can access and anchor within the vicinity of John Brewer Reef, provided [responsible reef practices](#) are followed.
29. Commercial *superyachts* less than 50 metres in *overall length* are able to access and anchor at John Brewer Reef, provided permit conditions and [responsible reef practices](#) are followed.

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30. Commercial *superyachts* 50 metres and above in *overall length* must remain in the General Use Zone (light blue zone) or the designated shipping area and use their tender to access the Conservation Park Zone (yellow zone).

Cruise ships

31. Cruise ships must remain in the General Use Zone (light blue zone) or the designated shipping area and use a tender to access the Conservation Park Zone (yellow zone).

Proposed Additional Management Strategies

Strategy 1 — Structures

Background

32. Concerns have been raised that increased tourism facilities and visitation could impact existing access and use at the site.

Proposed strategy 1A (underwater art site)

33. The Authority proposes a 'small structures area' in the vicinity of the underwater art site (see Map 2, page 7). This area will allow access and movement for all users while allowing for the potential future installation of additional small structures.
34. Examples of what would be considered 'small structures' include: snorkel trail, snorkel rest station or small fully submerged sculpture associated with existing permitted underwater art structures.
35. No further private moorings will be considered in this area. Public moorings may be considered.

Justification for proposed strategy 1A

36. This approach will allow the ability of all users to enjoy the area and for the installation of small (or minor) structures to complement the existing infrastructure.

Proposed strategy 1B (northern access to lagoon)

37. A structure free area is proposed at a commonly used entrance on the northern side of the lagoon (see Map 1, page 6). No structures will be considered in this area.

Justification for proposed strategy 1B

38. This area has been identified as a key access point into the lagoon and keeping this area structure free allows for unobstructed access to be maintained.

Proposed strategy 1C (site wide)

39. A trigger limit of five private moorings will be placed across the site. This includes the two currently permitted moorings near the underwater art. These moorings will be allocated on a first come first serve basis. Once five permissions are granted, any additional applications for private moorings will require a public information package (including public advertising) as per the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019* (Part 3, Division 3, Subdivision B). This cap does not apply to public moorings.
40. Applications for a permission to install a pontoon at the site will also require a public information package (including public advertising) as per the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019* (Part 3, Division 3, Subdivision B).

Justification for proposed strategy 1C

41. Limiting the installation of private infrastructure will ensure the site remains accessible to all users.

Strategy 2 — Levels of tourism visitation (site wide)

Background

42. It is expected visitation by both commercial tourism operators and recreational users will increase following the installation of the underwater artwork.

43. Over the period 2010-2019 (inclusive) there has been limited use by the tourism industry with an average annual visitation of ~230 tourists.

Proposed strategy

44. To ensure a balance of use is maintained in the future, a trigger limit for tourism visitation is proposed.
45. The Authority will monitor tourism visitation data annually and if use exceeds 15,000 visitors annually (~ 280 people per week) for two consecutive years, this site plan will be reviewed in collaboration with Manbarra Peoples and input from regular users. There is no proposal to cap the number of daily operators at the site.

Justification for proposed strategy

46. John Brewer Reef is a large reef and can absorb more than 15,000 tourist visits annually. A review of the site plan will occur if visitation exceeds this number to evaluate whether existing values and the balance of use has been maintained or if further management action is required.

Strategy 3 — Separation of uses around the underwater art site

Background

47. The popularity of fishing and anchoring at the site has led to concerns of potential conflict of use around the underwater artwork.

Proposed strategy

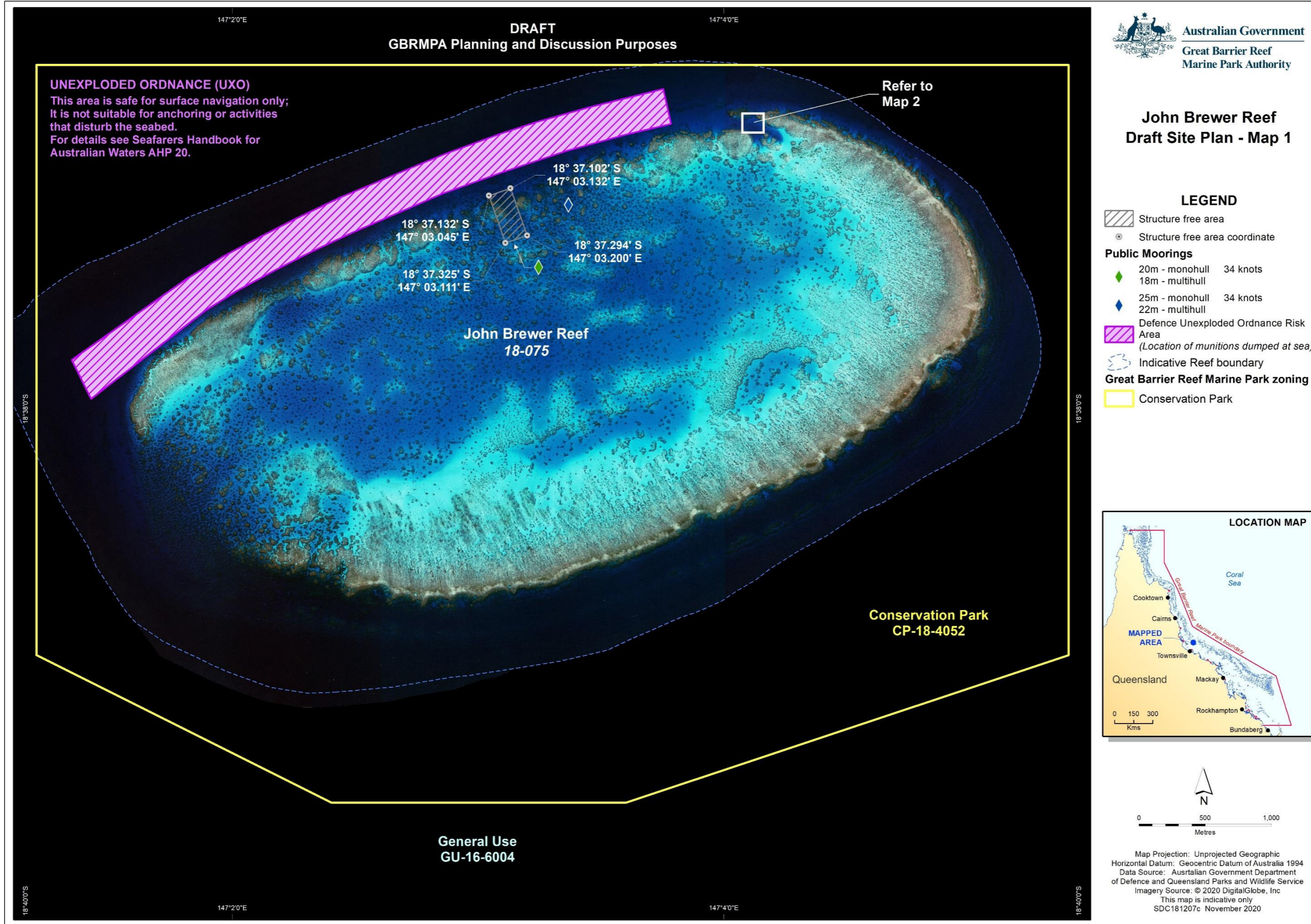
48. Users are to be mindful of the installed artwork and be aware that diving and snorkelling will occur in this area. Users may anchor in the sandy area around the artwork with due care (refer to [responsible reef practices](#)), please note some smaller structures can be found up to 50 metres from the greenhouse.

Justification for proposed strategy

49. Initially, a voluntary approach to anchoring and fishing over the artwork will be implemented. Consideration was given to the creation of a legislated Special Management Area to separate the conflicting uses at the site, however it was decided this option would only be implemented if the voluntary approach is found to be unsuccessful.

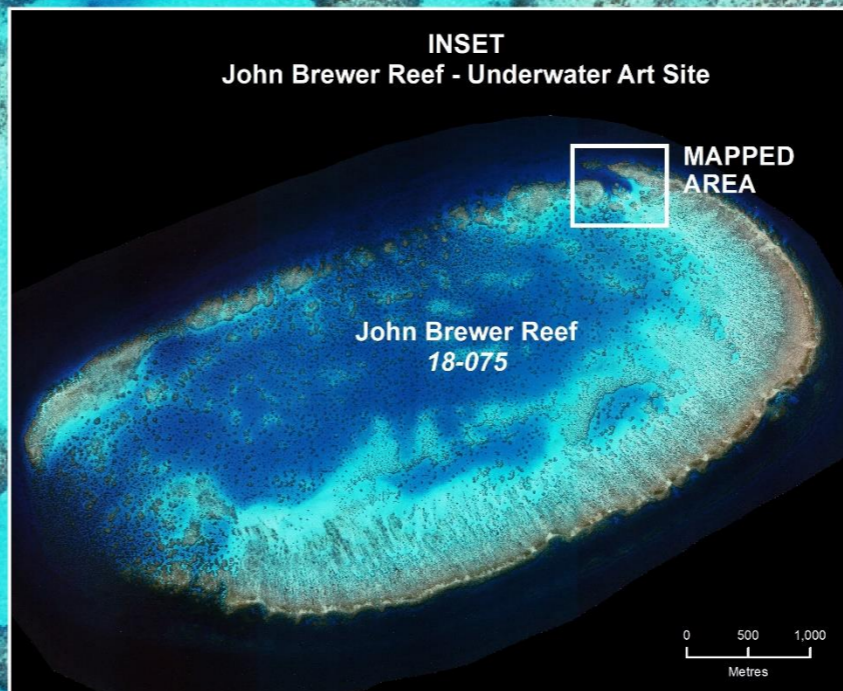
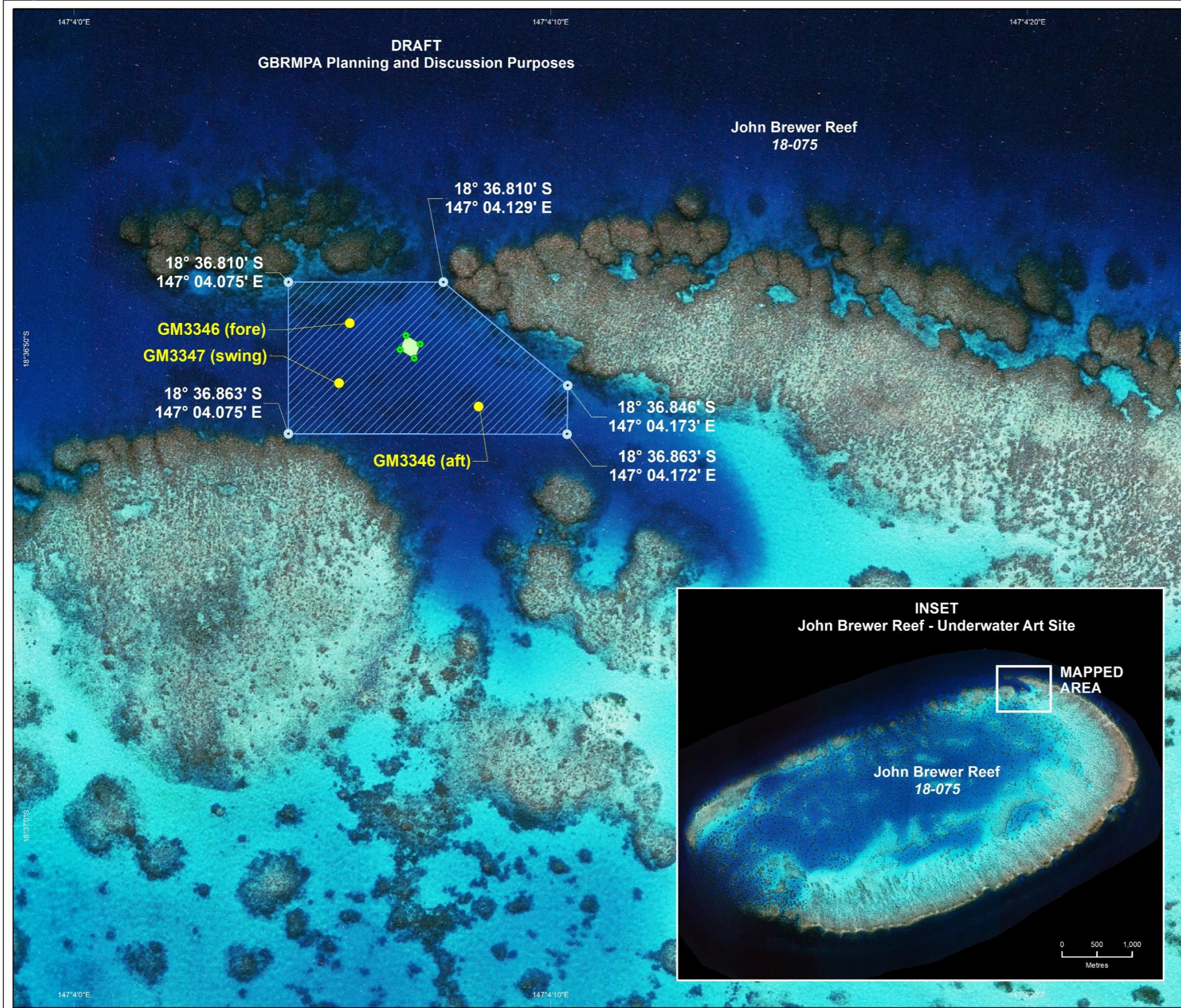


Map 1



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Map 2

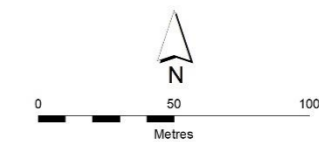


**John Brewer Reef
Draft Site Plan
Map 2**

LEGEND

- Small structure area
- Small structure area coordinate
- Underwater Art Coral Greenhouse area
- Underwater Art Coral Greenhouse coordinate
- Private Mooring

Note: Users are to be mindful of the installed artwork and be aware diving and snorkelling will occur in this area. You may anchor in the sandy area around the artwork, noting some smaller structures can be found up to 50 metres from the greenhouse.



Map Projection: Unprojected Geographic
Horizontal Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994
Data Source: Australian Government Department of Defence and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
Bathymetric Contours - Geoscience Australia (GA)
Imagery Source: © 2020 DigitalGlobe, Inc
This map is indicative only
SDC181207e November 2020

Related legislation[Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](#)[Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019](#)[Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003](#)**Definitions**

Overall length as per the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019* is defined as 110 per cent of the length shown on the vessel's load-line certification. If the overall length of a vessel cannot be worked out using this method it is the distance between a vertical line passing through a point that is the foremost part of the stem, and the vertical line passing through a point that is the aftermost part of the stern.

Superyacht as per the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019* is defined as a high-value, luxury sailing or motor vessel in use for sport or pleasure (whether for private or commercial use).

Further information

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References/ related material

1. Australian Institute of Marine Science, 2020, *John Brewer Reef*, viewed 14/10/2020, <http://apps.aims.gov.au/reef-monitoring/reef/18075S>
2. Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, *View Shipwreck - John Brewer*, viewed 14/10/2020, <https://dmzapp17p.ris.environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/wreck/wreck.do?key=2685>
3. Harriot, V., Saenger, P. (1995) *The John Brewer Reef floating hotel: a case-study in marine environmental monitoring: proceedings of a GBRMPA workshop reviewing the environmental monitoring program, held in Townsville, Australia in December 1989*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville.

Document control information

Approved by: Director, Policy and Planning

Approved date: Click for date;

Last reviewed: 18-Nov-2020

Next review:

Created: 10-Nov-2020

Custodian: Director, Policy and Planning

Replaces: New

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